

FESTIVALS AND SAINT DAYS IN SCOTLAND AFTER THE REFORMATION

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I

ONE thing which strikes the student of the Reformation period in Scotland is the change which came over the Reformers with regard to Christian Festivals and Saints' Days. The Reformed Church in Switzerland, with which Wishart had been connected, kept the greater Christian Festivals—Christmas, etc.—and the Confession of Faith, which he translated for the use probably of the congregations he founded in Scotland, has nothing to say against the practice. In the *Gude and Godlie Ballads* there is ample evidence that their writers saw nothing incongruous in the keeping of Christmas and Easter. In that collection we have "Ane carrell of the Epistle on Zule even" (a paraphrase of Titus III, 4-7)¹ another beginning :

"Hay Zule now sing and mak myrth
Sen Christ this day to us is born,"

and several others dealing with our Lord's birth. There is one on the "Conception of Christ" for Lady Day, March 25; and another entitled "Ane Sang of the Resurrection,"² so that we can conclude that in the early days of the Reformation movement there was not the same objection to Christian Festivals as afterwards arose in Scotland. When the Lords of the Congregation presented their petition to the Queen Regent demanding services in the vernacular, they asked that "common prayers be read weekly on Sundays and other festival days."³ Knox, as a minister in England, must have been acquainted with the use of special festivals in a Protestant Church: on at least one occasion he officiated

¹ *Gude and Godlie Ballads* (S.T.S.), p. 72. Paraphrase LVI is on the same passage of Scripture.

² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³ Knox's *Works* (Laing's Edition), I, 275.

at a Christmas Service.¹ In 1559 the leading Protestant ministers in Scotland—Methuen, Christison, Harlaw and Willock—were charged with celebrating communion at Easter,² a fact which pointed to a Reformed observance of that greater festival.

The *Book of Discipline*, however, takes quite another line. In the first head we are told that among the things which are to be utterly suppressed as “damnable to man’s salvation” is “the keeping of holy days of certain saints commanded by men, such as be all those that the Papists have invented, as the feasts, as they term them, of Apostles, Martyrs, Virgins, of Christmas, Circumcision, Epiphany, Purification, and other fond feasts of our Lady.”³ This list, it may be noticed, refers only to Saints’ days, for although Christmas and other festivals associated with the infancy of Christ are mentioned, they are expressly termed “feasts of our Lady.” No mention is made of such festivals as Easter, Ascension or Whitsunday. It has to be remembered that the men who drew up the *Book of Discipline* were well acquainted with the distinction between a minor Saints’ Day and a greater festival. Had the *Book* been drawn up by Scottish ministers in the eighteenth century, one could not have ventured to draw such distinctions, but it was different in 1561.⁴ Later in the book, mention is made of Easter, or “Pasche,” as it is usually termed. With regard to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the writers thought it sufficient to administer the sacrament four times a year and suggested that the first Sundays of March, June, September and December were appropriate days, “for your honours are not ignorant how superstitiously the people run to that action at Pasche even as if the time gave virtue to the sacrament, and how the rest of the year they are careless and negligent.”⁵ Here the intention plainly was to break with the old custom of Easter Communion in order to take away the old idea of there being anything special about that festival. It may be noticed however, that the festival of Whitsunday occasionally fell on the first Sunday of June,⁶ and that Sunday was also occasionally

¹ *Op. cit.* III, 297—“It cometh to my mind upon Christmas day in the year of our Lord 1552 preaching in Newcastle on Lyne.” It is perhaps worthy of notice that M’Crie alters this to “about Christmas 1552”—*Life of Knox*, p. 45.

² M’Crie’s *Knox*, pp. 124-45.

³ *Knox*, I, 185-6. It is somewhat surprising to find those stalwart Protestants referring to Our Lord’s Mother as “our Lady.”

⁴ The *Confession of Faith* of the English church at Geneva, afterwards incorporated in the *Book of Common Order*, mentions “distinction of days” among evils to be rooted out by the Christian Magistrates, but as at this time the five great festivals were kept in that city, the reference must be to Saints’ Days alone.

⁵ *Knox*: I, 239-240.

⁶ Whitsunday falls on the first Sunday in June about once in every four years: Ascension Sunday falls on that day about once in every ten years.

Ascension Sunday, so that the Reformers could not have wished to break with these festivals altogether. Had that been their intention, all they had to do was to make the Communion days the third Sundays in the months in question.

II

How far the Reformers were successful in breaking the habit of Easter Communion is not very clear.¹ Even where the day of the festival was unmarked by a communion service, the sacrament was often celebrated about the season. Thus in 1571, in St Andrews, the minister intimated on Palm Sunday that the communion would be on "Low Sunday."² Ten years later,³ the communion was on Palm Sunday. Patrick Simpson, who was ordained to the ministry in 1575, was in the habit of giving communion on "Pasch Day" without scruple. In 1616 he changed to the Sabbath after Pasch because the Bishops were so keen on Easter celebrations.⁴ He held (and as he was a leader among the stricter party, doubtless there were others who thought with him) that Easter Communion might "be either used, or not used, with a good conscience, and left to the arbitrament of the wise preacher."⁵ In 1566 the General Assembly heartily approved the Helvetic Confession of Faith, but they took exception to one point,⁶ for in writing to Beza the Scottish reformers declare "with regard to what is written in the 24th chapter of the aforesaid confession concerning the festivals of our Lord's nativity, circumcision, passion, resurrection, ascension and sending the Holy Ghost upon His disciples, that these festivals at the present time obtain no place among us, for we dare not religiously celebrate any other feast day than what the Divine oracles have prescribed."⁷ It is to be noted that the statement that these "festivals at the present

¹ Winzet refers to the action of the Reformers in abolishing Pasche and other festivals.—*Certain Tractates* (S.T.S.), p. 115.

² *Reg. St Andrews Kirk Session* (S.H.S.), pp. 351-2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 471.

⁴ *Select Biographies* (Wodrow Soc.), I, 94. Simson's father was minister of Dunbar, 1564-1582.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶ "If churches in right of their Christian liberty commemorate religiously our Lord's nativity, circumcision, passion and resurrection, with His Ascension into Heaven, and the sending of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples, we highly approve thereof. But feasts instituted in honour of men or angels we approve not."

⁷ Knox: VI, 547-9. It would be interesting to know who the Scottish penman was who wrote this letter, for it certainly breathes a much more Christian spirit than the paragraph in the *Book of Discipline*. It may have been Robert Pont who translated the Confession for the Assembly. The first signature attached to the letter (there are forty-one in all) is that of Robert Douglas, Principal of St Mary's College, St Andrews.

time obtain no place" is made. Perhaps the scribe had been one of those who were keeping them only a few years before. In 1570 the Assembly, on the report of a committee of which John Craig, John Row and David Lindsey were members, decided in answer to a question which had been addressed to them, that communion might be ministered on Pasch day where superstition was removed.¹ One is the more surprised to find this concession when it is remembered that, just five years before, the Romanists had proposed to have Easter celebrated according to the Roman fashion in every place where they could do so.²

In 1577 this matter was again before the Assembly though in a somewhat different form. The question was raised as to what should be done with "Ministers and Readers who read, preach or minister the communion at Christmas, Easter, in Lent, upon Saints days, to retain the people in blindness." The answer of the Assembly was to the effect that those who did such things should be admonished to desist, and if they did not do so they were to be deposed.³ The form of the question shows that there must have been a number keeping up the old ways, and that this was the case is borne out by several prosecutions for keeping superstitious days.

In 1573 ten persons were brought before the Session in St Andrews "for observing of superstitious day and especially of the Zule day" and they had to satisfy the Church for their conduct. They had ceased from work on that day and one of them who confessed to dancing said that he "saw Zule day kept holiday and the time might come when he may see the like yet."⁴ In 1575 a complaint was brought before the supreme court of the Church by the Commissioner for Nithsdale to the effect that Christmas services had been held in the town of Dumfries all the days of Yule. The offence was aggravated by the fact that, seeing that neither he himself nor the reader would conduct the services, the town's people brought a "reader of their own with tabret and whistle and caused him to read the prayers which exercise they used all the days of Yule."⁵ What the Assembly did in the matter does not appear, but the Dumfriesians seem to have continued in their own ways for in 1588 it is stated that in that town "holy days are kept by plain commandment and controlling of the deacons of the crafts, all superstitions, riotousness at

¹ Calderwood : *Hist.*, III, 5.

² Knox : II, 475-6. They did carry out their design in Edinburgh though one of the priests was arrested, and being placed at the cross, was served with "Easter Eggs." In 1564 Sir John Moreson, an ex-priest who was Reader at Muthill, got into trouble for administering communion on Pasch day to a hundred persons in a private house. *Reg. St Andrews Kirk Session*, pp. 226-7.

³ Calderwood : III, 384.

⁴ *Reg. St Andrews Kirk Session*, pp. 387, 390.

⁵ Calderwood : III, 351.

Yule and Pasche, etc.”¹ In Aberdeen patron and festival days were being kept in 1575 and earlier, and the Commissioner of the district on being questioned regarding the matter explained that the ministers who kept the days thought the practice quite lawful.² In 1586 Patrick Adamson the titular Archbishop of St Andrews was called before the presbytery to give his reasons why he had altered his text on Sunday 25th December: he had departed from his “ordinary.” In his reply he stated that he “meant no superstition but that he preached that day of the Nativity to show himself to be disagreeing and dissenting from the Neotoricks (*sic*) that have written of the birth of Christ, whom Mr Andrew Melville follows.” This explanation appears to have satisfied the Presbytery and, so far as the congregation were concerned, they were much more concerned with another complaint against their Archbishop, viz.—that he called “the flock of Saint Andrews goats.”³ A complaint was made against the Minister of Innerleith in 1580 that he had celebrated the communion on Easter Day. The offence was one of several which were alleged against him and authority was given to the “Brethren of the exercise of Edinburgh” to take order with him and report to the next Assembly.⁴

III

There seems little doubt that though many of the ministers set themselves against the observance of these festivals the people as a whole were otherwise minded. The little volume of Scottish Proverbs written by David Ferguson, Minister of Dunfermline 1560–1598 and one of the Fathers of the Scottish Reformation, shows that they held their place in the proverbial speech of the time. *E.g.*—“A Yule feast may be quat (requited) at Pasche”; “It is eith (easy) to cry Yule on another man’s cost.” In 1583 a number of merchants got into trouble in Glasgow because they had closed their booths on Christmas day and five of them had to make public repentance. The following year the Session ordained “the baxters to be enquired to whom they baked yule meat”; while so late as 1609 Acts were made against superstitious exercises being used at Yule or the days following.⁵ In Aberdeen in 1574 a number of people were brought before the Kirk Session for “playing, dancing and singing of filthy carols on Yule Day at even, and on Sunday at even thereafter.”⁶ The observance of the day as a holiday must have been

¹ Calderwood: IV, 658.

² *Ibid.*, III, 350.

³ *Reg. St Andrews Kirk Session*, pp. xcvi–c.

⁴ Calderwood: III, 477. The final result does not seem to be recorded.

⁵ Wodrow: *Life of Weems*, pp. 37–38.

⁶ *Selections*, p. 18.

fairly general for the following year the deacons of craft within the Burgh were ordered to "take trial of their crafts for setting idle on Yule day."¹ In St Andrews in 1573 the Minister, by command of the Session, publicly announced that all persons who should superstitiously observe Yule day or any other days should be punished.²

In face of the Church's objections to the keeping of the Christian Year one is surprised to find that the Calendar published in the Book of Common Order in 1564, as well as in subsequent editions, contained not only great festivals like Christmas, Easter and Whitsunday, but also such feasts as those of the Purification and Annunciation, as well as of the Apostles and lesser saints, the observance of which only a few years before had been declared to be subversive of the Gospel itself. Rules are also given for finding Easter and the festivals depending on it.³ Not only so: in addition to the Calendar there is a list of the fairs in Scotland, and these are practically all on days of "popish superstition."⁴

There is ample evidence that long after 1560 the old names remained among the people. In his "Introduction" to the Register of St Andrews Kirk Session Dr Hay Fleming mentions a number of ecclesiastical "days" which he had found named in the *Register*. These included not only the great days of Pasch and Yule but also such Days as May Day, All-Hallow Day, and Rood Day. Most of the fairs of Scotland are connected with Saints' Days and quite a number of the charters allowing these fairs to be held were granted after the Reformation. In some districts, too, customs which had been followed in the days of the Mediaeval Church continued. In Perth, in 1577, a considerable body of people got into trouble for observing "Corpus Christi" with a procession, and had to undergo discipline for their offence.⁵ The impression made cannot have been very strong, for, towards the end of the

¹ *Selections*, p. 21.

² *Register*, p. 388. A number of parishioners had been punished for observing Zule day before the public announcement was made. One of the Session responsible, John Hamilton, afterwards joined the Roman Church, and naturally his views on Zule day were changed. Writing some years later, he says of the Scots ministers—"In contempt of the other holy days observed in England they cause their wives and servants spin in open sight of the people on Yule day, and their affectionate auditors constrains their tenants to yoke their ploughs on Yule day in contempt of Christ Nativity."—*Facile Treatise*, pp. 17, 34.

³ The Calendar is not printed in full in any of the modern reprints of the *Book of Common Order* but will be found in the *Gude and Godlie Ballads* (S.T.S. Edition). The Calendar was also printed separately. In the inventory of Robert Smith, Printer, Edinburgh, there were "300 calendars to the Psalms."

⁴ In addition to Saints' Days we find Holy Cross Day, Rood Day, and Hallow Day.

⁵ *Perth Kirk Session Records*, quoted in Chambers' *Domestic Annals*, p. 326.

same year, the festival of St Obert's Eve was "superstitiously observed" by a band of citizens. Up to the eighteenth century a procession was held annually in Stevenson in Ayrshire on St Monoch's day, October 30.¹ At Culross² St Serf's fair was "chartered" in 1592, and up to about 1760 the town cross was decorated with garlands on the saint's Day while the youths of the town perambulated the streets carrying boughs.³ In Aberdeen, in 1574, the Master of the Sang School was ordered to refrain from granting a holiday to the children on any of the "days dedicated to superstition in Papistree." If any parents kept their children from school, the Kirk was to be informed.⁴

Trinity Sunday was long kept in unpresbyterian ways in some of the villages in Fife. In 1599 a number of the inhabitants of Raderny had to appear before the St Andrews Session for "dancing, drinking and disorder" on that day. One of the accused, David Wemyas by name, stated that the custom had been kept in Raderny before any of the session was born nor did he ever see the dancing stopped before. In spite of the efforts of the minister and elders the dancing went on as briskly as ever the following Trinity Sunday, and may have been indulged in even later.⁵

Although the names of "popish saints' days" continued to be used and the Calendar containing them continued to be printed, the National Covenant of 1581 mentions among other things to be condemned "dedicating of kirks, altars, days, vows to creatures."⁶ This indeed would not rule out such days as Easter and Christmas, which are not "dedicated to creatures," but there is no doubt that men like Henderson and Dickson in the following century did hold that "by the interpretation of the Confession of Faith according to the acts of the kirks that [Pasch and Yule] are abjured and therefore to be removed."⁷ Baillie, however, was of another opinion, and many of those who signed the Covenant in 1638 stated that they could not hold the Five Articles of Perth to be "positively unlawful."⁸

IV

In 1590 we find King James in the Assembly praising God that he was king in the sincerest kirk in the world. In Scotland there was no

¹ Barrett: *Cal. Scot. Saints*, p. 155.

² *Proc. Soc. Antiquaries Scot.*, LII, 170.

³ Barrett: *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁴ *Selections Eccles. Records*, p. 16.

⁵ *Reg. St Andrews Kirk Session*, pp. lxiv, lxvi.

⁶ Calderwood: III, 503.

⁷ *Records of the Kirk*, pp. 169-170. The Confession of Faith referred to is undoubtedly the "Covenant" of 1580. See also Gillespie: *English Popish Ceremonies*, p. 209.

⁸ Stevenson: *Hist.*, p. 206.

keeping of "Days." "The kirk of Geneva," he exclaimed, "keepeth Pasch and Yule. What have they for them? They have no institution."¹ Apparently, however, the freedom from such things was not so marked as his Majesty professed to believe, for just six years later we find in a list of "the common corruption of all estates" drawn up by the Assembly, "superstition and idolatry is entertained which uttereth itself in keeping of festival days, bonfires, singing of carols at Yule."² By 1600 the King's views of the "keeping of Yule had undergone a change," for in that year, Calderwood tells us, "Christmas was solemnly kept by the Court upon the 25th of December with shooting of Cannons out of the Castle of Edinburgh and other signs of joy."³ After his departure to England the King determined that the Scots should be made to follow "the neighbour kirk" to some extent. In 1609 he ordered the Court of Session to rise for a Christmas vacation—the first time, laments the historian, that this had been done from the Reformation.⁴ The innovation one need hardly add was much opposed by the ministers who declaimed against what are called "beggarly ceremonies long since abolished with popery." On the other hand the people appear to have enjoyed the holiday for Calderwood says that "Christmas was not so well kept by feasting and abstinence from work these thirty years before, an evil example to the rest of the country."⁵

The King's success led him to take another step, and in 1614 ministers were ordered by Royal proclamation to celebrate the Lord's Supper on April 24, the people to communicate each at his own Parish Church.⁶ This happened to be Easter Day, but there is no mention of that festival in the proclamation.⁷ One might have expected that there would have been bitter opposition to this act of the King, but whether it was because of the reason given for this unprecedented step—"the trial of popish recusants"—or whether people were not enough interested in the matter, the season passed without any signs of trouble. Calderwood who was certainly opposed to the innovation remarks simply—"the most part obeyed but not all."⁸ James repeated the proclamation the following year and this time did not hesitate to name the festival. "A charge,"

¹ Calderwood : V, 106.

² *Ibid.*, V, 410.

³ *Ibid.*, VI, 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, VII, 53.

⁵ *Ibid.*, VII, 53.

⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 191.

⁷ Row : *Hist.*, p. 302.

⁸ Calderwood : VII, 191. Row indicates that there were those who saw in the King's Act a "snare" to bring Ministers within the censures of the High Commission. It may perhaps be added that a modern writer (Rogers : *Social Life in Scotland*, II, 131) makes a statement differing very much from that of the contemporary historian. Referring to the King's Proclamation, he says—"The injunction was unheeded." Well might the late Andrew Lang say : "Why are . . . Presbyterians taught lies!"

says Calderwood, was "proclaimed at the cross of Edinburgh with sound of trumpet fifteen days before Easter Day to celebrate the communion at Easter in all times coming. The King by his own authority without the advice or consent of the kirk enjoineth kirk orders."¹ In spite however of His Majesty's high-handed action the injunction appears to have been received quietly and the people to have communicated without scruple.

The following year saw the Easter Communion enjoined by the Church as well as the State, for the Assembly of 1616 ordered that communion should be celebrated "four times ilk year in the Burgh towns and twice in landward and one of the times be at Easter yearly."² It is difficult to say how far this act was obeyed. It certainly was not obeyed as far as quarterly communion was concerned but, the indications are that so far as the Easter celebrations were concerned there was little opposition. Before the Assembly met orders had been sent down to Scotland by the King that Christmas, Easter, Ascensio and Whitsunday were to be observed in the University Chapels in the realm.³

In 1617 James paid his famous visit to Scotland and had the communion celebrated in the Chapel Royal on Whitsunday after the Anglican form.⁴ After his return to England he sent word to the Scottish Bishops commanding them to see that Christmas was duly kept.⁵ This letter was accompanied by another to the Council in which he prohibited payment of the stipends of Ministers who refused to conform to his wishes.⁶ Spottiswood seems to have endeavoured to get this order held in check until the behaviour of the offenders had been dealt with by the Synods.⁷ The King ordered the Bishops to keep Christmas precisely, and to preach themselves that day in the Cathedral churches, choosing suitable texts.⁸ The Christmas preaching seems to have been fairly general. The Archbishop himself officiated in St Giles and "laboured to prove that festival days were observed with preaching and prayer not long after the Apostles' times."⁹ There must have been a number who objected to such services (and more, probably, who objected to the way in which they had been imposed on

¹ Calderwood : VII, 196.

² *Ibid.*, VII, 247.

³ *Original Letters* : II, 806.

⁴ Calderwood : VII, 247.

⁵ One of the charges made against the "pretended Bishops" in 1638 was that, even before the Perth Assembly, they had in St Andrews, Edinburgh, and other Cathedral Churches kept festival days. Peterkin : *Records of the Kirk*, p. 25.

⁶ Cunningham : *Church Hist.*, I, 488.

⁷ Spottiswood : *Hist.*, III, 250

⁸ Spottiswood : *Hist.*, III, 249.

⁹ Calderwood : VII, 288.

the Church) yet opposition seems to have been very rare. Cowper, Bishop of Galloway, in defending the practice said that he knew of no ecclesiastical law in all the books of the Assembly forbidding such services,¹ holding apparently that while action had been taken it did not rest upon any law. The first Book of Discipline wherein festival days to creatures are condemned was never adopted either by the Church or the State.²

The next step the King took was to issue another proclamation "for observing of Holy days" in which the people "throughout this whole kingdom" were ordered to "abstain from all manner of husbandry and handy labour on the said Holy Days of Christmas, Passion Day, Pasch Day, The Ascension Day, and Whitsunday to the effect that they may the better attend to the Holy exercises which shall be appointed to be kept these days."³ This proclamation was issued in the end of January 1618, and some weeks later the King wrote the Magistrates of Edinburgh charging them to see that the inhabitants observed Good Friday according to its provisions. The day seems to have been observed after a fashion, work being stopped for a time, though, as the historian remarks, "there was no other preaching than the ordinary."⁴ These words, however, are a reminder that in getting the Church to hold services on Christmas, Good Friday, and Ascension Day, the King was not making such a great breach with custom, as his successor in the following century would have done had he acted in a similar fashion. In the days of James it was customary to have week-day services, in some towns daily, and in others once or twice a week. Consequently, there must often have been services on those days even although no special notice was taken of the nature of the commemoration. Row mentions a case where the minister of Leith preached on Yule day and spoke against those who kept holy days, while in the "Little Kirk" his copresbyter was using "bitter invectives, yea curses also," against all who would not keep them.⁵

Many other ministers who were opposed to festival days must nevertheless have preached on Christmas Day when it happened to coincide with the "weekly exercise." We have an interesting sidelight on this in a speech which David Dickson, minister of Irvine, delivered at the Assembly of 1638. He mentions that when he started

¹ *Works*, p. 9.

² Wotherspoon: *Re-Union* (Scot. Church Soc.), pp. 22-3.

³ Calderwood: VII, 290. The intention apparently was that work should be suspended altogether on those festivals which fell on week days, but in process of time this appears to have been modified, and work allowed except in the time of Divine Service. See *infra*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

⁵ *Historie*, p. 350. The date is 1630.

his ministry he found that on Christmas Day his church was "fuller than ordinary," although there was no reason for the people to suppose that the service was to be other than the "ordinar course of prayers." He, however, took occasion to speak to the people about the "idolatry that was like to break forth" and found afterwards that he was regarded throughout the country as having held a "Yule preaching."¹

V

So far the holding of special services on festival days, other than Easter, had rested on the authority of the King. James knew that the kirk had never been too ready to take orders from himself, and doubtless he felt that if the General Assembly could be got to agree to his desires there would be more chance of getting them carried into effect. He was successful in persuading, first, the Assembly to agree to the five famous Perth Articles, and secondly, in getting Parliament to ratify them.² The fifth of these articles commanded that the days commemorative of "Christ's Nativity, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension and of the Pentecost should be devoutly observed."³ The Act of Assembly was not carried until after much debate, some forty members voting against it. A protest, handed in by some of its opponents, states that by bringing back these festivals "occasion was being given to the filthy minds and mouths of fleshly livers . . . to rejoice in their rotten opinions and restored opportunities of sensual observation, of gaping gluttony, carols, etc." The keeping of "holy days commanded by man, the feast of Christmas, and other feasts," was "contrarie doctrine," and so "damnable to man's salvation."⁴ The Perth Acts were ratified by the Lords of Secret Council, and from the ratification, proclaimed at the Mercat Cross of Edinburgh, we learn that "every minister shall have the commemoration of the inestimable benefits received from God by and through our Lord Jesus Christ, His Birth, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension and sending down of the Holy Ghost, upon the days appointed for that use, and that they shall make choice of several and pertinent texts of Scripture and prove their doctrine and exhortation thereto and rebuke all

¹ *Records of the Kirk*, 169. Dickson was ordained in 1618.

² Assembly in 1618, Parliament in 1621. "The Act of the Estates authorising the Five Articles is the only statute on the face of the records of the Scots Parliament which either authorises or dictates on matters of religious Ceremonial." Hill Burton: *Hist. Scot.*, VI, 53. It may be noted that no penalty for disobedience is mentioned in the Act.

³ Calderwood: VII, 332.

⁴ *Ibid.*, VII, 329. This is an echo of the *First Book of Discipline*.

superstitious observation and licentious profanation of the said days.”¹ We have little evidence as to how far these injunctions were obeyed. Doubtless many ministers would choose their texts to suit the seasons while others would keep to their “ordinary.” The choosing of a Christmas text did not always mean the preaching of a Christmas sermon. Patrick Simpson of Stirling, as his biographer tells, was calumniated by some of his stricter brethren because he changed his text on “Zuil Day.” He defended himself by pointing out that he preached on the “Apparition of the angel to the shepherds” in order to refute those who thought that our Lord’s birth took place on December 25.² One thing we do know and that is that Easter became the regular season for communion, and continued to be so for many years, even in circles where “Popish Feasts” were rigorously condemned.

Many of those who protested strongly against kneeling at the reception of the consecrated elements had no objections to communicate on the Feast of the Resurrection. Calderwood specially mentions this as happening in 1619, stating that when the ministers of Edinburgh required the people to kneel at the Easter Communion the inhabitants of the city resorted in great numbers to get the communion after the old form. Even before the Assembly of 1618, the same historian tells us, sundry Bishops ministered the communion “to many of the people”³ on Easter Day,⁴ so that the objection to an Easter celebration could not have been very pronounced. One has to remember that whereas today the movable date of Easter is a hindrance to the observance of the rite in that feast in Scotland—for most Presbyterian churches have the communion at regular intervals—such an objection was not likely to be felt then as there seems to have been but little regularity in the dates fixed for the ordinances. Pasch, too, was a date in the Calendar which all knew. Even bitter opponents of the observance of “Holy Days” had no objections to having these days indicated by name. Thus Rutherford in 1635 writes that he intended that communion should be celebrated “the first Sabbath after Pasch.”⁵ A Puritan in our day would have said the third Sabbath in April. Even Gillespie would never assert that communion should not be celebrated in Easter, though he did hold “that the church had no power to determine Easter Day either as the only time or as the fittest time for the faithful of both sexes to receive the Eucharist.”⁶

¹ Calderwood : VII, 337. It will be noticed that nothing is said about communion at Easter. This was covered by the Act of the Aberdeen Assembly, 1616. While the Article relating to “Days” was the fifth Article, the ratification puts it first.

³ Calderwood, VII, 360.

² Wodrow : *Select Biographies*, I, 97.

⁴ *Ibid.*, VII, 337.

⁵ *Letters*.

⁶ *English Popish Ceremonies*, p. 128.

Yet it must not be thought that there was no opposition. In Perth in 1615 when the "Bishop of Galloway and the haill elders ordained" the communion to be celebrated there on April 9 and 16, Mr John Malcolm "dissented therefrom, alleging the celebration thereof on the said 9th day of April which is Pasche Sunday to be contrary to the Acts of Assembly thereanent,"¹ Malcolm had been Principal of St Leonard's College, St Andrews, and had been inducted minister of Perth in 1591. His objections must have passed away, for we find him agreeing to the Perth Articles after they had been passed by the General Assembly.² Stevenson states that in 1625 when the communion in Edinburgh was arranged for Pasch³ "many were displeased at the Season thereof." Three years later the same date does not seem to have given any trouble. In 1619 the ministers of St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, had the communion on Passion Sunday in order to avoid having it on Pasch a fortnight later.⁴

As time went on Easter Communion became more and more common. While at Elgin⁵ as well as in such places as Glasgow⁶ it seems to have been the rule all through the period 1613-1618, and usually on other two Sundays—sometimes Palm and Low Sunday; sometimes the two Sundays after Easter—it was introduced in 1636 and again in 1637. In the former year there had been an additional celebration on the "day after [probably the Sunday after] Ascension day." In Falkirk communion was on Pasch Day in 1635 as well as on the Sunday preceding.⁷ In Aberdeen Spalding laments that the Easter Communion was done away with when the Covenanters triumphed.⁸

But perhaps the strongest evidence to the hold the Easter Communion service had, in the East of Scotland at anyrate, is to be found in the narrative of Gilbert Blakhall,⁹ a Roman Catholic priest who visited Scotland in 1643, five years, be it observed, after the Glasgow Assembly. He arrived in Edinburgh on Holy Saturday intending to continue his journey to the North of Scotland. He found, however, that as the next day, Easter Sunday, was Communion Sunday, the "Puritans," as he

¹ *Session Records of Perth* (Spottiswood Misc.), p. 287.

² *Ibid.*, p. 289.

³ *Hist.*, p. 101.

⁴ Calderwood: VII, 352-5. The ministers were summoned before the High Commission for this and for refusing to give the communion to those who knelt. One of them, Richard Dickson, was deprived, the other, William Arthur, was admonished and ordered to have the communion celebrated again at Easter. He conformed but "celebrated after the old manner," *i.e.* without kneeling.

⁵ *Records of Elgin*, II. The Records for 1605-13 are wanting.

⁶ *Life of Weems*, p. 29.

⁷ Session Records quoted by Burns: *Old Scot. Communion Plate*, p. 41.

⁸ *Hist. Troubles*, I, 118.

⁹ *Brief Narration* by Gilbert Blakhall (Spalding Club), p. 162.

terms them, had proclaimed a fast,¹ and when he went to Leith he was unable to hire a boat as no man would do so on account of the cessation of work. As it would have been dangerous for him to remain in Edinburgh over Easter Sunday he rode to Queensferry expecting to get a boat there, only to be refused for the same reason as at Edinburgh and Leith. He proceeded to Borrowstouness where he stayed the night at an inn, and where his host invited him to come with him to communion at the Parish church the next day. He excused himself on the plea that he would communicate in Stirling where the sacrament was being celebrated also. On his journey to Stirling, as well as after his arrival there, he found himself in danger of being detected by the worshippers who were going to their communion services. As late as 1649 we find in Dunfermline that the session thought the "meetest times for the giving of communion here twice in the year shall be at Pasch and Michaelmas." ²

VI

Although the observance of Whitsunday was commanded by the King and also by the Perth Assembly there is little evidence that it was marked in any special way. It always fell on a Sunday and consequently no objection could be taken to Divine worship being conducted in the churches on that day. In 1617, when on his visit to Scotland, King James had communion celebrated in the Chapel Royal³ after the Anglican manner, and in the following year it was again celebrated there on that day by his instructions. But although, as has been pointed out, this was one of the festivals on which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper might be observed without in any way infringing the provisions of the *First Book of Discipline* there is nothing to show that it ever became, as did Pasch, a "Communion Sunday." Even in the Chapel Royal it does not appear to have been so observed after 1618. In the "Articles for His Majestie's Chapel Royal," issued by King Charles in 1633, the Dean was ordered to preach every Sunday and Holy Day, but the Communion was to be celebrated only on the first Sunday of the month.⁴ In Aberdeen Whitsunday appears to have been for some time at least one of the Communion Sundays.⁵

¹ Even before 1638 it was customary to have a preparatory Service on the Saturday before communion—*Reg. St Andrews*, p. 862; *Lee Lectures*, p. 396. In some places the Preparatory Service was on the Friday—*Records of Elgin*, II, 231. When the Assembly adopted the Directory it also ordered a "sermon of preparation" on the day preceding Communion Sunday.

² Stevenson: *Communion in Dunfermline*, vii. For some reason the resolution was never carried into effect.

³ Calderwood, VII, 196.

⁴ Rogers: *Hist. Chapel Royal*, p. clxxvi.

⁵ Spalding: *Hist. Troubles*, I, 233.

VII

Whether Good Friday, Ascension Day and Christmas, when it fell on a week day, were regarded as holidays—*i.e.*, marked by cessation from work, is doubtful.¹ Henderson, speaking in 1638 of the practice in St Andrews with which as minister of Leuchars he must have been well acquainted, stated that “they profess that they keep holy these days only in the time of preaching.”² Eighteen years earlier Spottiswood had been able to write to the King “I know your Majesty will desire to hear of one observation of Christmas which in this city [St Andrews] was never better kept with great confluence of people to church and a general cessation of people from work, one tailor excepted, whom I caused punish for his contempt.”³ From this it is evident that Christmas was more fully kept than Henderson indicates, and that he is probably referring to the other two week-day festivals. His views however find some support in a ruling of the Privy Council, June 1620, to the effect that these “five days” were not to be held as the Lord’s Holy Sabbath, though the people “were to repair to the church to hear the preaching upon these days,” under a penalty of 13s. 4d., the ministers being likewise enjoined “to do their duty upon the said days according to the Acts of Assembly.” From this it appears that attendance at Divine Service was all that was required, and as all “five days” are referred to, the legislators must have forgotten that two of them always fell, and one sometimes fell, on the “Lord’s Holy Sabbath.” Mr Patrick Galloway, Chaplain to the King, preaching in St Giles in 1618, urged that the people should observe the five Holy Days even although the “Kirk needed them not.” He allowed “teaching and a text chosen for the purpuse but not cessation from work or trading.”⁴ Gillespie, writing about 1634, says that “on the holidays they [the episcopal party] enjoin a cessation from work, a dedicating of the day to Divine Service even as upon the Lord’s Day.”⁵

It would appear, therefore, that the practice differed in different places. At Edinburgh in 1619 Christmas was kept as a holiday though three

¹ The original intention of the King had been that no work should be done on these days. See *supra*, p. 10.

² *Records of the Kirk*, p. 169.

³ Gordon: *Scotichronicon*, I, 460. Spottiswood in 1619 acknowledged that he made scruple of Holydays: *Bannatyne Miscel.*, I, 212.

⁴ Calderwood, VII, 298.

⁵ *English Popish Ceremonies*, p. 64. It is interesting to note that the Presbyterian uses the words “Lord’s Day,” while the Episcopalians speak of the “Lord’s Holy Sabbath.”

merchants were summoned before the High Commission because they had opened their booth doors, tried to dissuade others from attending the church, and reasoned against preaching on that day. They were dismissed with an admonition to behave better in future.¹ Along with them was charged Mr Patrick Henderson, Reader in St Giles, who had absented himself and placed "another in his room to take up the Psalm." He was informed that if ever he did the like again he would be deposed. As we find him in office as late as 1638 he must have conformed.²

VIII

There is quite a number of references to Good Friday services in the records of the period though they do not seem to have become general until the years immediately preceding 1638. Thus at Elgin such services were held in the three years, 1626-7-8, but there is no evidence that they were held in other years.³ In 1618 "ane superstitious day callit guid Friday" ⁴ is spoken of. In Falkirk, where in 1635 the communion was celebrated on Easter, there was a service held on Passion Day, as Good Friday was termed.⁵ The attendance, however, must have been small for the collection amounted to 26s. only, while that on the following Sunday was as many pounds. In Aberdeen Spalding says that use was to have preaching on Good Friday prior to 1639 and its abandonment by the covenanting Divines who succeeded the "Aberdeen Doctors" was a matter of great grief to him.⁶ Bishop Forbes writing to the members of the Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1634 informs them that he requires them to "preach of Jesus Christ His passion for our redemption upon the Friday before Pasch." ⁷

IX

Christmas appears to have been kept as a feast day, if not as a Church festival, during the greater part of our period. As early as 1599 the

¹ Calderwood, VII, p. 348. Cunningham (*Church Hist.*, I, 491) says there were "many merchants," quoting Calderwood as his authority. Comment is needless.

² He read the prayer from the Book of Common Order in St Giles on the Day in which the "Jenny Geddes" riot started on the reading by Dean Hanna of the New Service Book (Laud's Liturgy).

³ *Records of Elgin*, pp. 231, etc.

⁴ *Records*, II, 154.

⁵ Session Records, quoted by Burns, *op. cit.*, p. 49. There was also a service held on the preceding Friday.

⁶ *Hist. Troubles*, I, 118.

⁷ Wodrow: *Biographical Collections* (New Spalding Club), p. 256.

children of the Elgin Grammar and Sang schools got a "Yule vacanse" and it was still being granted in 1638. On the other hand both under Presbyterian and Episcopal rule "dancing and old rites used at the festival days called Yule" were discharged and prohibited, the Bishop in 1619 associating himself with the rules made by the elders for "punishing such enormities."¹ Before the Acts of the Perth Assembly were ratified by Parliament in 1621, a petition was presented to the members by a number of ministers who objected to them. The one "day" which was objected to in that petition was Christmas Day, which the petitioners declared led to all "sort of excesse and profanation."²

In Elgin Christmas was kept as a preaching day from 1620 onwards. Two years earlier, in November 1618, the Archbishop of Glasgow wrote to his "reverent and beloved brethren, the Moderator and Brethren of the Presbytery of Ayr," entreating them—and if entreaty did not move them—commanding them to preach "at least one sermon of the Nativity of the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, or if the people will assemble a second time ye may preach another also."³ Before Christmas in the same year the King himself wrote to the ministers of Edinburgh a letter wherein he "assured himself that they would according to the Acts of Assembly preach upon Christ's nativity upon Yule day."⁴ All the ministers so far as the city was concerned seem to have done so, though if a contemporary writer is to be believed the audiences were small.⁵ In July 1624, the King took another step and ordered the communion to be celebrated on Christmas Day. His act roused great indignation, especially as he threatened to withdraw the Session and all other Courts of Justice if the people did not attend and partake kneeling.⁶ What the upshot would have been one cannot tell, as the outbreak of the Pest put an end to the matter for the time being. Probably the communion would have been held, but whether it would have been received kneeling is doubtful. Calderwood, however, seems to make it clear that there

¹ *Records*, II, 158. Carols are mentioned among the "enormities."

² Calderwood, VII, 480. "Yule . . . declared to be the invention and tradition of man, to be will worship, superstition, entertaining the people in an error anent the birth of Christ, leading them to all sort of excess and profanation."

³ Calderwood, VII, 340. It is a striking indication of the views of the Hierarchy that the Archbishop does not command in his own name or in that of the Church but in "His Majesty's name and authority."

⁴ Calderwood, VII, 341. It is worth while noting that the King asked obedience not to himself but to the "Acts of Assembly."

⁵ "The Great Kirk was not half filled. . . . The dogs were playing in the midst of the floor of the Little Kirk for rarity of people and *these were of the meanest sort*"—Calderwood, VII, 341. The old historian had forgotten Who it was Who said—"The poor have the gospel preached to them."

⁶ Calderwood, VII, 621-4.

would have been more opposition to the posture than to the "superstition of the time."¹

Eight years later another attempt was made by some of the Edinburgh ministers to have the sacrament ministered at Yule, but as other ministers were against it, as well as many of the elders, the project was not carried out.² The Christmas sermon, however, still continued, and when Bishop Sydserf preached that day in Grey Friars Church his discourse was such that it gained admiration of many.³

X

There is little evidence as to the observance of Ascension Day in the period under consideration, and this is probably due to the fact that it always falls on a Thursday, which was one of the usual "Preaching Days." Consequently service would be held in a large number of churches on that day, though whether any reference would be made to the Ascension is another matter. So far as the writer has been able to gather, not a single prosecution took place either in civil or ecclesiastical courts with reference to its non-observance, nor has he found any of the Puritan party in Scotland complaining of its observance. In Glasgow in 1637 there was a special celebration of the communion "on the day after Ascension Day." Probably this refers to the Sunday after Ascension, and seems to point to some special heed being paid to this festival.⁴

XI

One is somewhat surprised to find that the practice of abstaining from eating flesh in Lent was carried over into the Reformed Church. As early as January 1564-5 the Town Council of Edinburgh ordained a proclamation to be made by sound of bell through all parts of the town "that no flesh was to be eaten or cooked by the common cooks" or "sold by any manner of person to no person" upon Friday or Saturday throughout the year, nor "in the time of Lentren" under penalty of a fine of 40s., and this "without prejudice of the pains contained in the Queen's Majesty's Acts anent eating of Flesh."⁵ Twenty-two years later a somewhat similar act was passed by the Council, following on a proclamation by the King ordaining abstinence from flesh eating during "this present Lentron."⁶ The acts relating to the sale and eating of

¹ Calderwood, VII, 629.

² Row: *Hist.*, p. 355. In 1635 the Bishop and the Presbytery of Edinburgh agreed that the communion should be celebrated on the first two Sundays in December. According to Row many thought this was done in order that in the years following the communion should be given at Yule—*Hist.*, pp. 390-1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁵ *Records Burgh Edin.*, III, 194.

⁴ Wodrow: *Life of Weems*, p. 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 487.

flesh on Friday and Saturday had been reviewed several times in the interval.¹

Even earlier, in 1561-2, we find the Scottish Privy Council ordering all the lieges to abstain from eating flesh in "the spring of the yeir callet Lentryne," not however on the ground that flesh eating was forbidden by the Church, but because at that season "all kyndies of flesche debilitates and decayis and grows out of seasoun."² This proclamation was repeated in 1574 as well as in later years, the same reason being given.³ In 1584 John Erskine of Dun, the well-known Reformer, received from King James a license "to eat flesh all the days of Lent and as oft as he pleases on the forbidden days of the week, to wit, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday."⁴ In 1585 a certain amount of relaxation was allowed to such as obtained "a certificate of age, sickness or infirmity signed by a physician and two honest witnesses."⁵

These enactments do not seem to have called forth any protests from the Church, the reason probably being that the ministers were quite aware of economic reasons which lay behind them. The reasons are well summed up by Wodrow with reference to a proclamation of the Privy Council of 1662 enacting that no "Flesh be killed or sold" on the weekly "fish" days, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, or during Lent. "This proclamation was merely a requisition of a civil keeping of Lent and weekly flesh days for the preservation of the young bestial, the consumption of our fish which the Lord had so bountifully given us, and had the Council seen to the execution of this good act as well as they did the severe and bloody acts against the Presbyterians, it had been much to the interests of the lieges."⁶ As late as 1665 some fleshers in Edinburgh and Leith were charged with breaking Lent, but no punishment seems to have followed.⁷

XII

The services on those days of "High Festival" would in all probability follow the usual order, suitable psalms and lessons being used by those ministers who wished to have the day specially marked. The practice of departing from the usual order of Scripture lessons was sanctioned by the Book of Common Order (Knox's Liturgy).⁸ In

¹ *Records Burgh Edin.*, IV, 13, 206, etc. ² *Reg. Privy Coun.*, I, 200.

³ *Ibid.*, II, 337, 431, etc.

⁴ *Spalding Club Misc.*, IV, .

⁵ *Reg. Privy Coun.*, IV, 49. On this occasion flesh eating was forbidden on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays throughout the year.

⁶ *Hist.*, I, 84.

⁷ *Justiciary Records* (S.H.S.), I, 123

⁸ The usual order was to read a book right through, chapter by chapter, but a leet of "certain chapters and parts of the scriptures" is given in Knox's *Book* for use in time of the Pest, etc.

Cowper's Draft Liturgy special evening and morning lessons are given for each of the "five days." Those for Christmas are the same as the lessons in the contemporary Anglican book. That book had, however, no special second lessons for Good Friday and Ascension Day, and special lessons for these days are given in Cowper's Draft. The lessons for Easter Day are quite different from the corresponding English ones, as are also the two lessons given for Whitsunday.¹ Cowper also gives a number of special psalms for the festivals. These, however, are all taken from the Anglican book with the exception of those assigned to Good Friday, for which day, as far as Psalms were concerned, the Book of Common Prayer made no provision.² There are also five collects given, one for each of the "days."³ These all owe something to the English book, but in no case are they identical with those in use on the corresponding festivals in the "neighbour kirk." The probability is that the distinctive feature of these special services where they were held would be the sermon. Indeed, in the Act of Assembly appointing the festivals this is all that is enjoined on the ministers: "They shall make choice of several and pertinent texts of Scripture and frame their doctrine and exhortation thereto and rebuke all superstitious observance and licentious profanation of the said days."⁴

XIII

The General Assembly of 1638 made short work of the "Five Articles," abolishing them all, and with them the "days of Commemoration" which the articles enjoined. Their observance was declared to be contrary to the religion professed within the realm. In the section of the Act dealing with them there is a number of references to troubles which had arisen in the past, and the members of Assembly meant to make certain that there would be nothing of the same kind in the future. Not only did it abolish them: it prohibited all disputing over them in all time coming.⁵

A few notes of the debates regarding them have been preserved. Henderson, while objecting strongly to their observance in Scotland, declined to judge other Reformed Churches which still kept them.

¹ Good Friday: Morning, Luke xxiii.; Evening, Heb. x. Ascension Day: Morning, Acts i.; Evening, Mark xvi. Easter: Morning, Zech. ix., John xx.; Evening, Ex. xiii., Col. iii. Whitsunday: Morning, Acts ii.; Evening, John xiv.

² Morning, Psalms xii., li.; Evening, xxv., xxvi., xxvii.

³ These collects are not, however, attached to the Communion Service but to the Order of Ordinary Morning and Evening Prayers.

⁴ Calderwood, VII, 337.

⁵ See *Acts of Assembly*, Dec. 10, 1638.

Ramsey could find no precept for them in Holy Writ. Baillie was quite willing to abolish them, but did not think they were abjured by the Confession of 1581 or that all who practised them should be abjured, whereupon the Moderator [Henderson] desired him "to tell his opinion when his voice was speired."¹

Although the Assembly of 1638 put an end so far as it could to all the "days" of the Perth Articles, there is no doubt that observance of them continued more or less. In 1641, when covenanting fervour was very strong, communion was celebrated on "Whytsunday" in Aberdeen by William Strachan,² a covenanting minister. Three years before Dr Scroggie, who was an Episcopalian, "gave the communion upon Yeull day in old Aberdein notwithstanding the same was forbidden by the Assembly Acts."³ The Westminster *Directory* declared that all festival days, vulgarly called Holy Days, had no warrant in the Word of God and so were not to be continued, but, while religious services ceased to be held on those days, which did not fall on a Sunday, one finds traces of a regard for them up to the nineteenth century. In 1808 a St Andrew's Day service was still being held in the Tron Kirk in Edinburgh.⁴

At Elgin in 1643 the Session had to threaten with punishment those who ceased work upon Yule day, and in succeeding years they had to repeat their threat.⁵ At Aberdeen in 1657 a miller was brought before the authorities because he refused to grind corn on Yule day.⁶ These prosecutions ceased with the coming of the second Episcopacy in 1661, though in Elgin it was not until 1665 that a Christmas service was held: judging from the collection the service must have been sparsely attended.⁷ The most interesting example of the survival of a Christmas custom that the writer has seen occurs during the ministry of David Williamson of St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, better known as "Dainty Davie." At a Christmas feast in 1690 he provided "mince pies" for the members of his session.⁸

¹ *Records of the Kirk*, pp. 169-170.

³ *Ibid.*, I, 85.

⁵ *Records*, II, 247, 260, etc.

⁷ *Records*, II, 304, 309.

² Spalding: *Hist. Troubles*, I, 233.

⁴ Lyon: *Hist. Lodge of Edinburgh*, p. 285.

⁶ *Selections from Ecc. Records*, 138-9.

⁸ Lorimer: *Leaves from the Book of the West Kirk*, p. 12. In 1654 a baker was rebuked at Aberdeen for "carrying pies on Yule day"—*Selections from Ecc. Records*, p. 121. Many similar examples of prosecution for such "offences" could be cited. Calderwood says of Patrick Hamilton, afterwards a King's Man, that in former times he was so precise "that he would not eat of a Christmas pie"—*Hist.*, VII, 298.

